

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 DAMASC 05866 151517Z
ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----110998 151532Z /44
P 151421Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4829

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 5866

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, US, PLO, XF
SUBJ: PLO-U.S. RELATIONSHIP

1. AMBASSADOR WEST, CURRENTLY VISITING DAMASCUS, HAD LONG CONVERSATION EVEINING SEPT 14 AT DINNER MY RESIDENCE WITH PRESIDENT'S POLITICAL ADVISOR DAOUDY CONCERNING SYRIAN VIEW OF PEACE PROCESS. DISCUSSION COVERED PLO REJECTION LAST MONTH OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S OFFER OF DIRECT OFFICIAL CONTACTS WITH THE PLO IF IT ACCEPTED 242 WITH APPROPRIATE RESERVATION. WEST MADE PLAIN TO DAOUDY THAT SAUDI ARABIA HAD BEEN MORE THAN DISAPPOINTED IN ARAFAT'S ACTION BECAUSE SAG HAD BEEN CONVINCED DURING SECRETARY'S AUGUST MIDDLE EAST TOUR IT HAD ARAFAT'S COMMITMENT TO FORMULA ACCEPTING 242. DAOUDY OUTLINED IN FAMILIAR TERMS REASONS INHIBITING ARAFAT FROM DOING SO AND CITED CONTINUING DOUBTS NOT ONLY IN PALESTINIAN BUT IN SYRIAN BAATH PARTY CIRCLES ABOUT U.S. INTENTIONS.

2. DAOUDY THEN PRAISED AUGUST 12 STATEMENT OF DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN AS SEP HELPFUL TO PEACE PROCESS. SAID HE RECOGNIZED NEED TO INCREASE PLO CONFIDENCE IN U.S. INTENTIONS AND THEREBY MAINTAIN OVERALL MEMENTUM. SUGGESTED THA ADMINISTRATION URGE U.S. CONGRESSMEN IN COMING WEEKS TO MEET WITH ARAFAT AND REEMPHASIZE TO HIM AND HIS PRINCIPAL

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DEPUTIES U.S. READINESS TO HAVE DIRECT OFFICIAL TALKS AND ASSURE PLO THAT SUCH TALKS WOULD BE AT MEANINGFUL LEVEL.

3. I COMMENTED THAT DAOUDY'S IDEA OFFERED LITTLE PROSPECT OF ANY IMMEDIATE POSITIVE IMPACT ON NEGOTIATING PROCESS. SAID WE NOW APPARENTLY HAD RECEIVED ALL SYRIA INTENDED TO PROVIDE US IN TERMS OF DRAFT TREATY LANGUAGE (DAMASCUS

5795). I BELIEVE PRESIDENT CARTER WOULD NEED MORE TANGIBLE ASSIST FROM ARABS, INCLUDING SYRIANS, IN COMING WEEKS. WEST THEN SUGGESTED THAT IF FOMMIN KHADDAM PRESENTED LETTER FROM ARAFAT TO CARTER IN SEPT 28 WHITE HOUSE MEETING, THIS MIGHT HAVE USEFUL IMPACT EVEN IF LETTER DID NO MORE THAN RESTATE APPRECIATION ARAFAT HAD ALREADY PUBLICLY EXPRESSED CONCERNING LATEST USG POSITION TOWARDS PALESTINIANS. IT COULD ALSO CONVEY HIS OFFER TO MEET WITH U.S. CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS TO EXPLAIN PLIGHT OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND REAL ATTITUDES OF THEIR (PLO) LEADERSHIP. SUCH MESSAGE COULD BE SUPPORTIVE TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S EFFORTS. DAOUDY WAS INTRIGUED BY IDEA AND AID HE THOUGH IT WOULD ALSO APPEAL TO ARAFAT. HE BELIEVE ARAFAT WOULD FIND IT ADVANTAGEOUS TO BE ABLE TELL HIS ASSOCIATES HE HAD WRITTEN CARTER IN THIS VEIN.

4. DAOUDY ASKED WHAT I THOUGHT OF IDEA OF ARAFA LETTER. REPLIED I LACKED AMBASSADOR WEST'S PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF PRESIDENT CARTER AND COULD NOT THEREFORE ADDRESS SELF TO CARTER'S LIKELY REACTION. I THOUGH LETTER COULD DO NO HARM BUT ON OTHER HAND WAS UNSURE WHAT IT MIGHT ACCOMPLISH UNLESS IT SO PHRASED AS TO GIVE CARTER CARD TO PLAY WITH U.S. CONGRESSIONAL AND PUBLIC OPINION. WEST AGREED ARABS HAD TO FIND WAYS TO HELP CARTER IN BOTH AREAS AND THE SOONER THE BETTER. CRITICIZED INADEQUATE ARAB EFFORTS WITH U.S. MEDIA AS WELL AS WITH CONGRESSIONAL OPINION. ADDED THAT HE BELIEVED U.S. CONFRONTA-
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TION WITH ISRAELIS WAS PROBABLY INEVITABLE, BUT IT HAD TO BE AT RIGHT TIME AND ON RIGHT ISSUE. CARTER WOULD NEED TO PICK HIS ISSUE CAREFULLY IN ORDER TO ASSURE SUCCESS. WEST SAID IN HIS OPINION IT APPEARED TO HIM THAT CARTER WAS READY TO TAKE ISSUE OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH PLO AS ONE ON WHICH TO CONFRONT BEGIN, ASSUMING ACCEPTANCE OF 242 BY PLO. ADDED IT WOULD BE MOST UNFORTUNATE IF ARABS LET CHANCE SLIP TO AFFECT PEACE PROCESS POSITIVELY THROUGH MISREADING CARTER'S INTENTIONS AND DETERMINATION IN COMING WEEKS, AS THEY HAD DONE IN AUGUST.

5. I TOOK THIS OPENING TO NOTE THAT OFFICIAL PAPER OF SYRIA'S RULING PARTY, "AL-BAATH," HAD THAT MORNING (SEPT 14) QUESTIONED USG MOTIVATION IN ANNOUNCING LATEST POSITION REGARDING PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION (ARTICLE HAD SUGGESTED THIS MIGHT ONLY BE NEAR AMERICAN MANEUVER TO DIVIDE THE ARABS.) WAS SYRIA IN FACT SIGNALLING IT WAS AGAINST DIRECT USG CONTACT WITH PLO? DAOUDY REPLIED ELEMENTS IN PARTY HIERARCHY REMAINED VERY DISRUSTFUL OF USG INTENTIONS AND IT NO SECRET THAT PLO SHARED ITS PLANNED REACTIONS TO U.S. OVERTURES WITH ASSAD AND OTHERS IN SYRIAN LEADERSHIP. HOW-

EVER, HE MAINTAINED ASSAD WAS NEITHER OPPOSED TO DIRECT PLO-U.S. CONTACTS NOR ON OTHER HAND WAS HE ABOUT TO EXERT UNDUE PRESSURE TO SEE THESE CONTACTS TAKE PLACE.

6. IN PRIVATE ASIDE TO DAOUDY, I RECALLED WORKING OF CARTER'S LATEST LET3R TO ASSAD IN WHICH PRESIDENT RECALLED IT WAS WITH ASSAD THAT CARTER HAD FIRST RAISED IDEA OF PLO ACCEPTANCE OF 242 AND THAT HE CONTINUED TO LOOK TO ASSAD'S LEADERSHIP "TO HELP PERSUADE PLO TO TAKE THIS IMPORTANT STEP." (STATE 9213387) SYRIAN SPONSORING OF IDEA THAT ARAFAT SEND LETTER TO CARTER COULD BE FIRST STEP, HOWEVER SMALL, TO DEMONSTRATE ITS READINESS TO MAKE POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION. DAOUDY INDICATED HE INTENDED SUBMIT RECOMMENDATION ASSAD FAVORING IDEA OF ARAFAT LETTER.

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7. COMMENT: IN TERMS OF DEVELOPING A PLO-UJS. RELATIONSHIP, IF ARAFAT WENT NO FURTHER THAN TO RESTATE HIS LATEST PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF APPRECIATION FOR USG STATEMENTS VIS-A-VIS PALESTINIANS, I DON'T SEE HOW SUCH A MESSAGE TO CARTER WOULD HELP MOVE MATTERS AHEAD VERY FAR. NONETHELESS, I AM ATTRACTED BY POSSIBILITY THAT LETTER COULD ENLIST MORE POSITIVE SYRIAN ROLE IN WHOLE PROCESS. IF ASSAD AGREES TO HAVING KHADDAM SERVE AS ARAFAT'S POSTMAN, HE WILL HAVE SHIFTED FROM WHAT BY ALL EVIDENCE WAS HIS NEGATIVE POSITION LAST MONTH CONCERNING U.S.-PLO DIALOGUE, A POSITION WHICH APPARENTLY WAS DECISIVE IN THE CENTRAL COUNCIL'S TURNDOWN OF OUR AUGUST OVERTURE.

8. AMBASSADOR WEST HAS CLEARED THIS MESSAGE.
MURPHY

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, PEACE TALKS, UNGA RESOLUTIONS, CAT-A
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 15-Sep-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P840070-0228, P800020-0342
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Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
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Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1266630
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PLO-U.S. RELATIONSHIP
TAGS: PGOV, PBOR, US, XF, SY, PLO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/1d414046-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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